

5242

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future"

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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF RAISED HOUSE BILL NO. 5242: AN ACT
CONCERNING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR REQUIRED
VACCINATIONS**

Submitted to: The Committee on Insurance and Real Estate

By: Lisa Honigfeld, Ph.D. – Vice President for Health Initiatives, Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut (CHDI) and the Children's Fund of Connecticut

Senator Crisco, Representative Fontana, and other members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee, as Vice President for Health Initiatives of the Children's Fund of Connecticut and its subsidiary, the Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut (CHDI), I appear before you to speak to House Bill #5242, *AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR REQUIRED VACCINATIONS*.

Our mission is to promote primary and preventive health care for underserved children in Connecticut. Our Board Members include key state leaders in health care and members of the academic and business community who are committed to improving health outcomes for children in Connecticut. We work to develop and promote comprehensive, effective community-based health and mental health care systems through identifying, supporting, and disseminating evidence-based programs to address health needs of children. A key focus of our work is to ensure that all children in CT benefit from a medical home – a regular source of preventive care and treatment services that is comprehensive, family centered, culturally competent and linked to resources in the community.

The proposed legislation is critical to beginning the process of ensuring that Connecticut's children receive necessary primary care services. As proposed, Bill #5242 will extend health insurance coverage for one important primary care service, immunizations, which are part of the larger set of preventive services that ensure children are healthy and ready to learn when they enter school. CHDI recently released a report showing that families are less likely to obtain preventive services for their children, including immunizations, if they need to pay out of pocket for these services.

Our research included analyses of children's utilization of primary care services in 35 pediatric and family medicine practices throughout Connecticut covering more than 75,000 children. Only 54% of children in families who needed to pay some or all of the costs for preventive services out of pocket had at least one primary care visit in 2006. This compares to 72% of children who did not have to pay directly for services.

Regarding immunizations, our study shows that when families need to pay out of pocket, children miss, on average, 4 of the 14 immunizations in the first two years of life.

I am here today to urge the Committee to consider broadening the proposed legislation in two ways 1) to extend the legislation to address all preventive child health services and 2) to exempt all childhood preventive services from co-pays and deductibles.

We know that health is a significant contributor to a child's school readiness and ultimate success in life. When families do not make use of primary care services for their children, not only do they not receive preventive services, such as immunizations, but they also miss important opportunities for early identification of health and developmental problems. Our research shows that if families do not need to pay out of pocket for these services, they are more likely to utilize primary care services in lieu of other expensive health services down the road.

The Children's Fund and CHDI has and will continue to devote our resources to work collaboratively with state agencies, commercial insurers and managed care providers to support promotion of primary care for children in Connecticut. Through such a public private partnership, we hope to continue to do our part, providing helpful information, evaluation, and support, and hope that you will do yours, to assure the healthy growth and development of Connecticut's children.

Please call on us if further information would be helpful.

Thank you.

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